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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 5 — At 2 A.M. each weekday, Daniel Friedman is reading and clipping newspaper articles from America's major dailies, preparing a collection of what the Pentagon considers to be the top military reports of the day.

As daylight approaches, the printing presses on the fourth floor of the Pentagon will whirl into action, so that by 8 A.M. the early bird edition of Current News, a compendium of clippings from more than 20 newspapers, will be at the White House, the State Department, the National Security Administration and other top echelon offices of the military establishment.

Virtually unknown to the general public, this Pentagon publication reaches 15,000 Government and military personnel daily and asserts a considerable influence on national policy by providing a cross section of press coverage on a wide range of national security issues.

"I read it every day," said Joseph Lehman of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. "It is very informative and often has exclusive features from smaller dailies we might not otherwise see."

A Main Edition at Noon

Founded in 1950, the paper has become a barometer of the interchange between the Government and the press. More than any one newspaper,

Current News offers its readership the latest and most varied coverage of military analysis and news from large newspapers as well as smaller ones.

"The fact is," said one military correspondent, "people just don't have time to read two or three papers any more."

Current News is made up entirely of clippings from other papers and comes out five days a week in two editions — the early bird edition, which arrives throughout Washington before the start of the business day, and the main edition, which circulates about noon and is a longer and more complete synopsis of that particular day's military issues.

The articles chosen for use in no way reflect the preferences of those who currently hold power, according to Harry Zubkoff, the editor in chief who has guided Current News through the administrations of the last eight Presidents.

"We try to be as objective as possible," Mr. Zubkoff said. "If a story doesn't get in, it's either too long or just not as important as the others."

"Quite simply, our problem is one of selectivity," he added. "We can use less than 10 percent of the stories that make it through our screening process, so our choices are based on what we think are the most important stories and who covered them best."

Changing Scope and Coverage

Having run the operation since its inception 33 years ago, Mr. Zubkoff feels the paper's influence is hard to pinpoint, though its distribution list includes the President, key members of Congress, the State Department and



Drawings by Tom Bloom

most of the nation's highest-ranking military officers.

The publication began as a consolidation of various Army, Navy, Air Force and other efforts to circulate a timely and authoritative journal of the day's news.

"Since we started, it has changed in terms of the scope of coverage," said Mr. Zubkoff, "just as in a sense national security concerns have broadened over the years. As the U.S. became more aware of its role in the world, and people have become more concerned with foreign affairs and national security, we have expanded."

As a supplement to the daily editions, Current News occasionally prints a special issue, usually a long essay or editorial, or a series of articles dealing with a single subject. One recent special issue compiled essays on the problem of international terrorism.

In addition, the same office publishes three biweekly journals, Foreign News, Energy News and a summary of books and studies called Defense Literature. A fourth, Fraud and Waste, focuses on the two perennial topics of the Pentagon's critics.